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## Introduction

Mahjong as we know it is believed to have developed in the Ningpo region of China in the 1870s – it was further developed in China with each region having its own rules with special hands. Chinese children learned to play by watching, so there were no written instructions – no standardised rules.

In its present form Mahjong is most closely linked to rummy - Sets of 3 or 4 tiles to complete a set common in both games. It has its own terminology and suits - there are 108 suit tiles, 16 wind tiles, 12 dragon tiles, four flower tiles and 4 season tiles – total 144 [in some sets there are 4 white ‘joker’ tiles – if these are not available the 2 Bamboos are used as the joker tiles] If no one goes Mahjong a deciding game called a ‘Goulash’ is played. The game has evolved in China, Japan, NZ, US & Britain with differing national characteristics. I could go as far as it has evolved again in Bangalore, India and this is our International Version.

Every group has their own 'house rules'. Many people have already played the game in the past, but rules may vary wherever the game was learned. The content of this website will help our members across the globe learn how to play and enjoy Mahjong together in the same version.

*Beginners:* It is important to understand the tiles and learn the suits before playing the game.

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## The Game

Mahjong means ‘Sparrow’ so when moving the tiles – it is called ‘Twittering’ because of the sound it makes.

Mahjong is a game for 3 or 4 players – usually played by 4 separate individuals. Players have a special routine for choosing who will break the ‘Great Wall of China’ and each player takes 13 tiles then East Wind takes a 14th – as East is first to discard a tile. To play the game - each player takes one tile from the wall at a time in turn anti-clockwise and discards the one they don't want. The idea is to form a ‘**Pung**’ (set of three the same) or a ‘**Kong**’ (set of 4 the same) or a ‘**Chow**’ (a run of three tiles).

A basic hand in Mahjong is ‘four pungs and a pair’ including winds and dragons (Ordinary Mahjong). Special Hands allow you to collect different combinations of tiles. They are usually more difficult to complete and therefore attract higher scores.

Our version of Mahjong has lots of Special Hands, many of which are statistically unlikely to be completed, although a ‘fishing’ score may be awarded if the player is waiting for the last tile to complete Mahjong.

The objective of the game is to obtain a complete hand i.e. 14 tiles in all to call Mahjong. [NB no tile is discarded when calling Mahjong]. If no-one goes Mahjong then a ‘Goulash’ is played.

*Next Week ... We will get to know the tiles, suits and how to build and break the wall of China.*